

President's Report, June 2023

To say that the last two years have been interesting is an understatement. Our current strategic plan allows a framework within which we can reflect on what we have achieved, what we are actively working on, and areas where we continue to struggle.

The current vision for the PEI Chapter of the College of Family Physicians is that this organization support family physicians in providing patient-centred care within an integrated health care team in a sustainable health system. To this end, three broad goals have helped to direct the activities of the Chapter.

The first goal focuses on the patient and the wider community. We recently celebrated World Family Physician Day on May 19th. As in previous years, a letter was sent to the Minister of Health and family physicians were recognized in the sitting of the legislature. While there is overwhelming support for family physicians in the community, as exhibited by the outcry for so many Islanders who do not have access to one, we need to do a better job of educating and promoting the unique value that family physicians bring to the system. Family physicians are skilled clinicians working across many aspects of their communities, from emergency departments to inpatient wards to primary care clinics to focused areas of practice such as palliative care or obstetrics. The relationship that develops as we care for patients across the continuum of their lives is unique to medical specialties, and it is that relationship that allows family physicians to be effective advocates for their patients.

The second goal in the strategic plan is around stakeholder engagement, and on this front, I feel our Chapter has exceeded expectation. Over the past two years we have developed open communication with government partners including the Minister of Health, thanks in large part to the efforts of Heather Mullen, Health Policy Analyst for the Atlantic Chapters. And while I have not had the pleasure of working with our current Minister of Health, the Honourable Mark Mclane, I am hopeful this positive relationship between our Chapter and that office continues.

The College Chapter remains at the table in providing input as the UPEI Medical School continues in its development. We meet regularly with Dr. Kath Stringer, Department Head of Family Medicine at Dalhousie University, around the residency program and changes that will be coming in the future training of family physicians.

Family physicians are engaged at many levels of leadership within the health system, and are actively working to bring about the realization of the CFPC Patient Medical Home model for delivery of primary health care to Islanders. On January 17, 2023 representatives from the PEI-CFP, Health PEI, and the Department of Health met with the federal Minister of Health, the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, to review the PMH model and provide context around the resources required to achieve the outcomes

team-based care can achieve. We also met with Health PEI on this same day to advocate for the unique role and leadership family physicians have in the provision of team-based care.

Many of you will recall the concerns that were raised with the advent of the Pharmacy Plus Program last fall. By bringing our concerns forward, the Chapter now has a seat at the quality review committee for this project. We have been approached to offer our expertise around the impact other changes to health regulations and the scope of allied healthcare providers that are planned in the future might have and look forward to remaining engaged at these tables.

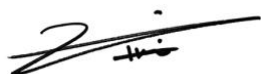
The recent release of the Provincial Clinical and Preventive Services Planning For Prince Edward Island: Doing Things Differently and Better Final Report by Dr. David Peachey, recommends renaming the Patient Medical Home a Primary Care Collaborate Centre, which suggests a move away from the family physician as the leader of the healthcare team. It has been recognized at the national level that the term Patient Medical Home can be confusing, but the idea in the report that team-based care can function to its full potential with *any* mix of healthcare professionals, and that the family physician is not integral to that team, is misguided.

Family physicians have a depth of knowledge and scope of practice that is unique and necessary. The provision of primary care is just a part of the work we do; the leadership, mentorship, teaching, research, and advocacy that are also part of our training prepare family physicians to be a resource to the entire team. I understand this report gives recommendations that may or may not be adopted by Health PEI. But I am concerned that the language of a “collaborative care centre” has already been heard in the legislature, and I do not feel our government partners fully appreciate the impact this can have. Language matters. We are not general practitioners, not primary care providers, and not prescribing providers. We are family physicians and no one else is trained to do what we do.

Finally, the PEI Chapter of the College of Family Physicians exists to support its members. We have planned continuing education events like the Family Medicine Conference each year, sponsorship of the Practicing Wisely workshops, most recently held at the end of March, and organization of other events such as the Long-Term Care Conference on May 26. The Chapter hosted the first ever Patient Medical Home Symposium in April of 2022, sparking interest across the region and providing a vital introduction to this model for healthcare providers and government partners alike.

Over the coming months we will be entering into negotiations for the next Master Agreement. Family medicine is changing. The work we do needs to be recognized and remunerated in an equitable way across all medical specialties, including family medicine. This is a call out to any members to send us your ideas, suggestions, and feedback on what matters to you most. This will be compiled into a letter that will be sent to the negotiation parties outlining the challenges our current Agreement poses to family physicians and what needs to look different.

So as my term comes to a close, I want to thank each and every one of you for the part you play in providing care to your community, for the extra things you provide to the system, and for the privilege of serving as your president these past two years. And to Dr. Scales, who is already demonstrating his strong leadership, I know the Chapter is in good hands.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Z. H.' or similar, with a stylized flourish.